Rome 8th July 1868

My dear Maria

As I am really becoming jealous of your charming writing; so now "I've set" myself down to do my best for you've put me on my metal, but you are to be envied in having those dear girls to write about, whereas I have nothing but my dull self & that nothing but the rheumatism, but however I am better by far & should I hope be well but for the daily storms of rain & hail which cause such damp & cold that I am a mere Barometer for the present

Such a state of things was never known before in Rome for July is considered the great heat — Today there are prayers in all the churches for fine weather the harvest is spoiled the hay lost

but the fruit & vegetables are splendid.

As Garibaldi assumes to be once more frisky & is longing again to get Rome (there) every body know he'll get nothing but a no licking ~~again~~; so the poor Pope has thought it expedient to camp 6 thousand troops in the "camp of Hannibal" upon the Alban mountains 12 miles off. The consequence is the soldiers are not only washed away daily but are often blown back again & will have eventually learned nothing but to nurse their powers

So I'm likely soon to have a lively time of it as my house will be the place of refuge my having long since engaged to receive a Cardinal & 22 Nuns for protection all which will be such a pretty novelty that I shall have an high enjoyment, but get I hope these Garibaldians will never get in, for they would plunder the City

I am now working very hard at the "dolce far niente" by order of my doctor for its very hard work for me to do nothing but Walter Scott of whose works I have still four novels which I have never read, am I not lucky? my chief labour is signing the certificates of hundreds of Italian deserters who now return on the Armistice lately granted by the King of Italy - They owe a crop of Rome as they tilled the earth which these dignified Romans will not do

I was my intention to have gone early to the Tolfa baths again, but the cold & damp weather have up to this prevented me & yet I am not a little glad to be left in the quiet enjoyment of my Roman Summer when it is warm enough to be a Summer which it must be soon - at present it is almost winter & I am not able to paint

My dinners now are very enjoyable for there's no end of fine fruit, peaches apricots plums. 3 kinds of cherries & figs - the fruit is